

REMARKS

Present Status of the Application

The Office Action rejected claims 6-8, 10, 13 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Asai et al. (U.S. 6,534,723; hereafter Asai) in view of Sakuyama et al. (U.S. 6,689,639; hereafter Sakuyama) and Degani et al. (U.S. 5,564,617; hereafter Degani). The Office Action rejected claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), as being unpatentable over Asai in view of Sakuyama and Degani and Acocella et al. (U.S. 5,591,941; hereafter Acocella). The Office Action rejected claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), as being unpatentable over Asai in view of Sakuyama and Degani and Gansauge et al. (U.S. 5,244,833; hereafter Gansauge). The Office Action rejected claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), as being unpatentable over Asai in view of Sakuyama and Degani and Benenati et al. (U.S. 6,177,729; hereafter Benenati). The Office Action further stated that claims 15 and 16 are allowable over the prior art. Applicants appreciate this indication for allowable subject matters. Accordingly, Applicants have canceled claims 6 and 12 and further amended claims 7-11 and 13-14 to dependent on claim 15 for further defining the invention recited in claim 15. After entry of the foregoing amendments, claims 7-11 and 13-16 are in proper condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

For at least the foregoing reasons, it is believed that the pending claims 7-11 and 13-16 are in proper condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would expedite the examination of the above-identified patent application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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